

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 LUBUMBASHI 0182

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2  
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CG  
SUBJECT: SHABA INVASION AND THE MOBUTU REGIME: UPPER CLASS  
ZAIRIAN VIEWPOINT

1. SUMMARY: NUMBER OF HIGH AND MIDDLE-LEVEL CADRE NON-GOVERNMENT ZAIRIANS HAVE EXPRESSED COMMON VIEWS ON CURRENT CRISIS IN ZAIRE. IN GENERAL THEY SEE LITTLE DANGER OF COMMUNIST THREAT POSED BY INVASION, AND ARE MORE OR LESS IN SYMPATHY WITH INVADERS. THEY SEE REAL CRISIS IN ZAIRE NOT AS INVASION BUT AS CONTINUED MISDEEDS OF MOBUTU GOVERNMENT. THEY REGARD MANIFEST FAILURE OF MOBUTU'S POLICIES FOR LAST DOZEN YEARS AS FAILURE OF THE WEST AND THE U.S. TAKING FOR GRANTED ASSUMPTION THAT USG DETERMINES COURSE OF EVENTS IN ZAIRE, THEY URGED THAT U.S. TAKE MORE DIRECT, ACTIVE ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND FORCE CHANGE IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF COUNTRY. DESPITE CRITICISMS OF U.S. POLICY, THEY REMAIN VERY FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD U.S. AND SEE IT AS ONLY HOPE FOR CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE IN ZAIRE. END SUMMARY.

2. CONSULATE HAS SPOKEN PRIVATELY TO NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF ZAIRIAN ELITE INDIVIDUALLY AND IN SMALL GROUPS IN RECENT DAYS ABOUT SHABA INVASION, MOBUTU GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE, AND ROLE OF WEST AND U.S. IN ZAIRE. ZAIRIANS SPOKEN WITH INCLUDE LAWYERS,

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MEMBERS OF STATE JUDICIAL SYSTEM, AND TOP AND MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGEMENT OF MAJOR COMPANIES (GECAMINES, SOCIETE NATIONALE DES CHEMINS DE FER ZAIROIS, AGENCE MARITIME DU ZAIRE, SOCIETE NATIONALE D'ELECTRICITE). ONLY ABOUT HALF OF GROUP WERE NATIVE TO SHABA. ALL ARE WELL-TO-DO, AND REPRESENT CLASS WHO HAVE BENEFITED MOST FROM END OF COLONIAL RULE AND STABILITY UNDER PRESIDENT MOBUTU. NONE OCCUPY POLITICAL POSITIONS OR ARE

PROMINENT ACQUEREURS, BUT ALL HAVE STRONG VIEWPOINTS ON POLITICAL QUESTIONS AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO INFLUENCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ZAIRIAN SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT IN YEARS TO COME. THESE ZAIRIANS HAVE ALL EXPRESSED REMARKABLY SIMILAR VIEWPOINTS ON MAJOR CURRENT ISSUES CONFRONTING ZAIRE, WHICH THEY OBVIOUSLY HOPED WOULD BE MADE KNOWN TO DECISION-MAKERS IN USG.

### 3. THE INVASION

ALL ARE VERY WELL INFORMED CONCERNING INVASION DESPITE VIRTUAL MEDIA BLACKOUT OF EVENTS IN WESTERN SHABA. ALL IDENTIFIED INVADERS AS KATANGESE AND OTHER EX-ZAIRIANS. SEVERAL MENTIONED POSSIBILITY OF ANGOLAN AND SOVIET/CUBAN SUPPORT OF INVADERS FROM OUTSIDE COUNTRY, BUT GENERALLY DID NOT SEEM PARTICULARLY ALARMED AT PROSPECT. ON QUESTION OF WHETHER THERE IS COMMUNIST THREAT TO ZAIRE POSED BY POSSIBLY SOVIET-SPONSORED INVASION, ALL EMPHATICALLY SAID ZAIRIANS ARE NOT COMMUNIST AND NEVER COULD BE COMMUNISTS, THAT TRADITIONS AND PREFERENCES OF ZAIRIANS PRECLUDE POSSIBILITY OF COMMUNIST TAKE-OVER OR STRONG INFLUENCE. SOME EXPRESSED STRONG SYMPATHY WITH THE INVADERS; OTHERS MORE CAUTIOUSLY REFERRED SIMPLY TO "GENERAL SUPPORT" OF INVADERS BY POPULATION; NONE CONDEMNED INVADERS.

### 4. THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT AND ITS REACTION TO INVASION

MOST SUCCINCT COMMENT ON MOBUTU GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO INVASION WAS ONE ZAIRIAN'S REACTION: THE INVASION SHOWS THAT MOBUTU GOVERNMENT IS "A JOKE". "WHAT CAN BE SAID OF REGIME IN POWER 12 YEARS WHOSE ARMY AND GOVERNMENT COMPLETELY DISINTEGRATE IN PATH OF FEW HUNDRED LIGHTLY-ARMED REBELS? REGIME IS FACADE,

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BEHIND WHICH IS NOTHING. GOVERNMENT HAS LIVED ON BLUFF FOR 12 YEARS. BLUFF DOESN'T WORK ANYMORE." ANOTHER SAID ZAIRE IS "SHIP AT SEA AHOSE CAPTAIN AND CREW ARE DRUNK." ALL OTHERS GAVE SIMILAR IF LESS VIVID APPRAISALS OF MOBUTU AND GOZ. THEY CITED STEADY DETERIORATION OF ZAIRE IN ALL DOMAINS FOR 17 YEARS, THE DISASTROUS STATE OF ITS ECONOMY, THE COLLAPSE OF AGRICULTURE, THE WRETCHED STATE OF THE FAZ AND ITS CONTINUAL HARASSMENT OF CIVILIAN POPULATION, AND THE MASSIVE CORRUPTION OF GOZ OFFICIALS. ALL BLAMED MOBUTU AND HIS REGIME FOR THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEMS, AND SAW NO HOPE OF IMPROVEMENT WHILE MOBUTU REMAINS IN POWER.

### 5. WESTERN AND U.S. ROLE

THE ZAIRIANS PERCEIVED U.S. AND WEST AS VIRTUALLY COINCIDENTAL. ALTHOUGH ZAIRE INDEPENDENT FOR 17 YEARS, ALL STRESSED CONTINUING PATERNALISTIC RELATIONSHIP AND VIEW THAT ZAIRE IS RESPONSIBILITY OF WEST. WHEN ANY WESTERN NATION ACTS IN REACTION TO ZAIRE (E.G. FRENCH DECISION TO TRANSPORT MOROCCAN TROOPS/SUPPLIES TO ZAIRE), THEY ASSUME USG SPONSORING

OR AT LEAST IN ACCORD WITH ACTION. NOTING THAT ZAIRIANS ALL REGARDED ZAIRE AS PRIVILEGED PARTNER OF U.S. AND ITS ALLIES, THEY SAID FAILURE OF ZAIRE IN LAST DOZEN YEARS GENERALLY REGARDED AS FAILURE OF WESTERN APPROACH. THEY ESPECIALLY CRITICAL OF U.S. AID AND INVESTMENT, FEELING THAT FORMER USED MERELY TO LINE POCKETS OF CORRUPT POLITICIANS AND LATTER ORIENTED TOWARD PRESTIGE PROJECTS OF NO VALUE TO DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (SEVERAL CITED INGA-SHABA TRANSMISSION LINE IN THIS REGARD). EVEN MORE CRITICISM EXPRESSED OVER FRENCH APPROACH TO INVESTMENT AND ASSISTANCE. REGARDING WESTERN REACTION TO THE INVASION, SEVERAL WERE CRITICAL OF XVENCH/MOROCCAN DECISION TO TRANSPORT TROOPS. SEVERAL COMPLIMENTED U.S. ON WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS RESTRAINED, PRUDENT U.S. MIDDLE COURSE OF PROVIDING NON-LETHAL AID AND NOTED THAT U.S. MILITARY AID NECESSARY BECAUSE OF PROBABLE SOVIET-CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN INVASION. OTHERS SAW U.S. MILITARY AID AS CONTINUATION OF ATTEMPT TO PROP UP CORRUPT REGIME.

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6. WHAT U.S. SHOULD DO.

ALL CLEARLY FELT THAT U.S. HAD POWER NOT ONLY TO INFLUENCE SITUATION IN ZAIRE BUT TO DETERMINE OUTCOME. PROSPECT OF U.S. INTERVENTION IN ZAIRIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS NOT ALARMING

TO THEM, BUT RATHER WELCOME AND EXPECTED SO LONG AS IT TAKES POSITIVE DIRECTION. U.S. INVOLVEMENT WHICH THEY SEEK WOULD TAKE TWO FORMS. FOR THE LONG TERM, THEY EXPRESSED HOPE THAT U.S. AID BE TIED TO SPECIFIC PROJECTS (INCLUDING POST-INVASION RECONSTRUCTION) CLOSELY MONITORED AND SUPERVISED BY U.S. PERSONNEL (SEVERAL CITED IVORY COAST AS EXAMPLE OF WELL-RUN COUNTRY WHERE FRANCE HAS WISELY KEPT CLOSE WATCH ON ADMINISTRATION BY PLACING EXPATRIATE CADRES IN KEY POSITIONS). MORE IMMEDIATELY, THEY CALLED ON USG TO DO WHAT IT CAN TO FORCE CHANGE IN ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP. AS ONE SAID, "U.S. GOVERNMENT USED TO USE CIA TO TAKE CARE OF SUCH THINGS:" ANOTHER CITED ALLEGED CIA ACTIVITIES IN ALLENDE'S CHILE AS POSSIBLE MODEL. THEIR BASIC SENTIMENT THAT INVASION MERELY AN INCIDENT, NOT A CRISIS, THAT REAL CRISIS IS MOBUTU-INSPIRED LONG-TERM DETERIORATION OF COUNTRY. THOSE WHO SEEMED MORE AWARE OF COMMUNIST THREAT, PERHAPS AS RESULT OF DAILY EDITORIAL HARANGUES ABOUT CUBAN AND RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT, SAID IF U.S. NOT WILLING TO TAKE DIRECT ACTION TO CHANGE GOVERNMENT, IT SHOULD GET OFF FENCE AND PROVIDE INCREASED MILITARY ASSISTANCE

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TO MOBUTU WITH APPROPRIATE STRINGS SO THAT CHANCE FOR NON-COMMUNIST CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT POSSIBLE IN FUTURE.

7. COMMENT:

WE BELIEVE COMMENTS OF THESE ZAIRIAN CADRES REFLECT WIDESPREAD FEELING IN ZAIRIAN NON-GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHMENT. THEIR VIEW OF THE WEST IS PATERNALISTIC AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE ABSENCE OF A COMMUNIST THREAT GENERALLY NAIVE. THESE ARE THE MEN ONE WOULD NORMALLY EXPECT TO BE THE STAUNCHEST DEFENDERS OF THE REGIME, IN VIEW OF THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND SUCCESS. FACT THAT THEY VIEW INVASION PRIMARILY AS OPPORTUNITY TO GET RID OF MOBUTUISM THEREFORE ALL-THE-MORE STRIKING.

8. ONE POINT THAT EMERGES CLEARLY IN CONVERSATIONS WITH THIS GROUP IS THAT, DESPITE THEIR NEGATIVE FEELINGS ABOUT USG SUPPORT FOR MOBUTU, THERE REMAINS ENORMOUS RESERVOIR OF GOODWILL TOWARDS U.S. AMONG THEM. DESPITE WHAT THEY VIEW AS WRONG-HEADED AND SHORT-SIGHTED FAITH OF USG IN MOBUTU, THEY STILL SEE U.S. AS THE MOST IMPORTANT FRIEND OF ZAIRE, AND ITS HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. DEGREE OF THEIR FAITH IN U.S., AND THEIR CONFIDENCE IN U.S.' ABILITY TO CONTROL EVENTS IN ZAIRE INDEED A LITTLE FRIGHTENING. WE POINTED OUT THAT MOBUTU IS PRESIDENT OF ZAIRE AND NOT PAWN OF U.S., THAT U.S. CANNOT CONTROL GOZ OR PICK ZAIRE'S POLITICAL LEADERS, THAT CIA NOT IN BUSINESS OF DEPOSING GOVERNMENTS, THAT GOZ MUST EXERCISE SOME CONTROL OVER DISBURSEMENT OF U.S. AID AS SOVEREIGN POWER, AND THAT ULTIMATELY FUTURE OF ZAIRE LARGELY IN HANDS OF ZAIRIANS, NOT AMERICANS. THEY GENERALLY NODDED IN AGREEMENT, BUT REMAINED UNCONVINCED.

DESPAIRING OF ABILITY OF ZAIRIANS OF COMPETENCE AND GOOD  
WILL LIKE THEMSELVES TO INFLUENCE POLICY UNDER WHAT THEY SEE  
AS UNRESPONSIVE MOBUTU DICTATORSHIP, THEY CONTINUE TO LOOK  
TO U.S. AND WEST AS ONLY REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE FOR CHANGE.  
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